

Undergraduate Dissertation

Trabajo Fin de Grado

The new era of ‘Post-ELF’: the dismantlement of the need of a model for ELF. A mixed-methods empirical study of learners’ attitudes towards the teaching of English pronunciation in Spain.

Author

Claudia Bordalo Magdalena

Supervisor

Ignacio Guillén Galve

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Grado Estudios Ingleses
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Abstract

This dissertation questions the need of a pronunciation model for English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Spanish educational system due to the consequent competitiveness, insecurities and feeling of inferiority that its use triggers among students. As a starting point to change this, a new egalitarian and tolerating approach is proposed along the lines of what the linguist Mark Hancock in his article published in 2018 names ‘Post-ELF’, the new era following that known as English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF). This new proposal presents the teaching of English from a multicultural and free perspective based on communication and intelligibility among speakers. The present study is based on a mixed-methods empirical research in which the attitudes towards the teaching of English of learners from Spain are analysed and evaluated. The study confirms the learners’ negative opinions on the way in which ELT is organised in Spain concerning pronunciation teaching and their preference towards ‘Post-ELF’. The results of the study can be used to highlight the importance of communication, intelligibility and tolerance as the basic premises for the teaching of the English language as the language of international communication.

Resumen

Este trabajo cuestiona la necesidad de tener un modelo de pronunciación en la enseñanza del Inglés en España debido a la consecuente competitividad, inseguridades y sentimiento de inferioridad que su uso genera entre los estudiantes. Como punto de partida, se propone un nuevo enfoque tolerante e igualitario en la enseñanza del Inglés de acuerdo a lo que el lingüista británico Mark Hancock en un artículo publicado en

2018 llama ‘Post-ELF’, el nuevo periodo posterior a lo que se conoce como Inglés como Lengua Franca. Este nuevo planteamiento propone la enseñanza del Inglés desde una perspectiva multicultural y libre basada en la comunicación y el entendimiento entre hablantes con la finalidad de solventar el problema. Este estudio se basa en los resultados de una investigación empírica de métodos mixtos (MM) que analiza y evalúa las opiniones de los estudiantes de inglés sobre la enseñanza del idioma en el sistema educativo español. El estudio confirma las opiniones negativas por parte de los estudiantes hacia la manera en la que la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés se organiza en España y su preferencia hacia el ‘Post-ELF’. Los resultados del estudio pueden usarse para destacar la importancia de la comunicación, la inteligibilidad y la tolerancia como fundamentos esenciales en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua de comunicación internacional.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to prove that a model of pronunciation is not necessary in the teaching of English as the language of international communication since it creates a competitive environment among learners which in its turn triggers prejudices and a feeling of inferiority among them. In order to change this, a new approach of a free, multicultural, and diverse English is proposed because languages are like living organisms: dynamic, changeable and limitless. This study is based on a mixed-methods research (MMR) in which the attitudes of Spanish-speaking learners towards the teaching of English are analysed and evaluated in order to see the preferred aim of students regarding pronunciation; in other words, whether a native-like-accent or an ELF/‘Post-ELF’ approach should be implemented.

It is historically acknowledged that the world is usually ruled by those who have the power, and inevitably, by their language (Suresh Canagarajah, 1999). During the 17th and 18th centuries, the British settlers founded countries where they imposed their mother tongue and values. According to the linguist Braj Kachru’s categorisation (1985), the UK along with Ireland, the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Caribbean and South Africa, constitute what is known as the ‘Inner Circle’, where English is the first and official language. This group of people is basically what the controversial term of native speakers (NS) refers to, the natural and all-time owners of the language. Given the existence of an ‘Inner Circle’, it is of pure logic that there is also an ‘Outer Circle’, this one being the result of the former colonies of the British Empire. It is formed by countries such as India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Singapore among others, to which English is the second language. Last but not least, there comes the so-called ‘Expanding Circle’, which is composed by the rest of the countries, the

case of Spain for example, where English is taught as a foreign language, and in which, as its name suggests, the number of NNS is constantly growing and expanding (Walker, 2010).

For the last few decades, English has been taught as a ‘foreign language’ following a prescriptive and normative manner, that is to say, having one ‘standard’ variety of English as the only possible model (Crystal, 2000). Regarding pronunciation, there have traditionally been two models, a British one, the so-called Received Pronunciation (RP) which is better known nowadays as General British (GB) (Cruttenden, 2014), and an American one, General American (GA) (Cruttenden, 2014). These varieties belong to the ‘Inner Circle’, and therefore, are the ones that provide the model, establish the norm, and have certain hegemony over the language (Isik, 2008, p.124). It can be said that English teaching in the ‘Expanding Circle’ has been structured along the lines of ‘correctness’ and ‘incorrectness’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ pronunciation with regards to a unique model (Abercrombie, 1991, p. 251). Moreover, this customary sense of superiority and authority over the language from the side of NS is firmly stated in the opinion of well-known linguists such as Wyld (1934, pp. 207-208), who refers to RP as “superior to any form of English in its beauty and clarity” (Davies, 1997). Nevertheless, given the undeniable global importance that English has over every aspect of life nowadays (Jenkins, 2006, 162) and the fact that NNS outnumber NS, its supremacy and belonging uniquely to the latter has been highly questioned by ‘English as a *Lingua Franca*’ (ELF) supporters (Walker, 2010, p. 5).

ELF is a new approach to English language in which English is given a new role, a ‘common language’ among NNS who do not share the same mother tongue (Walker, 2010, p. 6). Despite the fact that there are conflicting opinions across the ELT

community towards ELF (Hancock, 2019), it is seconded by renowned linguists such as Firth (1996), House (1999, 2001, 2003), Kirkpatrick (2007), Jenkins (2006, 2007, 2009) and Seidlhofer (2011) among others. Intelligibility and communication are prioritised over accurateness, and accented speech is valued as a sign of national identity. (Walker, 2010). Nevertheless, even though ELF questions the need of a native-like model, they still consider the necessity of a more simplified and achievable international pronunciation model that guarantees non-native speakers' (NNS) intelligibility and successful communication such as Jenkin's (2000) 'Lingua Franca Core' (LFC) (Rogerson-Revell, 2011) or the Scottish accent, due to its rhotic features (Abercrombie, 1991). But, as a researcher I wonder, is a model actually necessary?

In this study, my concern with questioning the need of a model and my personal interest in discovering the learners' experiences, ambitions, and ideologies towards the way in which English is taught in Spain have been mainly motivated by Mark Hancock's articles: 'Pronunciation Teaching in Post-ELF' (2018) and 'ELF: Beyond Dogma and Denial' (2019). In his article 'Pronunciation Teaching in Post-ELF' (2018, p. 2), Hancock presents an incredibly open-minded, flexible, and multicultural way of seeing the role of English in the new globalised and diverse environment based on tolerance, equality, accommodation and the focus on the context and process of communication rather than on a target model; this is what he identifies as the new era 'Post-ELF'.

Taking everything into account, the structural development and the research questions of this study are the following:

- (i) Are Spanish students of English satisfied with the way in which the language is taught in Spain? Do they prefer an educational system based on achieving

a ‘native-like’ accent or a more flexible approach based on the ELF/‘Post-ELF’? (Quantitative study).

- (ii) Is it actually true that students support the ELF/‘Post-ELF’ approach? Do they just agree with the idealised version of the theory or do they actually put it into practice in their daily life and international meetings? (Qualitative study that takes account of the results from the quantitative research).
- (iii) Should the educational system discard the need of a model even for ELF and accept and promote ‘Post-ELF’? (Based on the mixed-methods approach that leads to the concluding remarks).

2. METHODS

This section is divided into four subsections: ‘Personal experience, motivations, and context of the study’, ‘participants’, ‘quantitative research: the questionnaire’, and ‘qualitative research: the interviews’. The following subsections address the methodological features that have been used in order to develop my research.

2.1. Personal experience, motivations, and context of the study

As the researcher of the study, I would like to devote some lines to my personal experience and motivations for this study. I am an almost-graduate student from the Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain, with a degree in English Studies, and I have always had a keen interest in the field of English Phonetics and Phonology. As a student, despite my interest in all kinds of regional and international accents, my personal aim had always been achieving a British native-like accent, therefore, I had always strictly followed the ‘norm’. Nevertheless, a module on English pronunciation that I took during my Erasmus academic year at the University of Leicester and the intercultural experience that I lived there, Leicester being one of the most diverse and multicultural

cities of Britain (Leicester City Council), opened my eyes and introduced me to the global world of ELF. Even though I speak with a British accent, I support ELF and I think everyone should be free to have a choice. Hence, I am interested in knowing the attitudes of Spanish learners towards ELF considering the normative way in which English is taught in Spain.

This study was carried out throughout the academic year of 2019-2020 at the University of Zaragoza, a city in the middle-north east of Spain, a country “categorised as [part of the] ‘expanding circle’ context” (Carrie, 2017, p. 428). It has to be taken into account the fact that part of the study was developed under the circumstances of the COVID-19 global pandemic and consequently, contact with the participants had to be partly restricted and relegated to online procedures.

It is an empirical study based on an MMR approach, composed of quantitative and qualitative research, which has been traditionally unconventional in the field of applied linguistics but increasingly common in the present. The aim of the quantitative part is to explain the research and the purpose of the qualitative part is to understand its results (Riazi and Candlin, 2014). Hence, according to Riazi and Candlin (2014), it “provi[des] a full picture” (p. 162) and therefore “a more comprehensive understanding of the object of the study” (p.137). The present MMR study is sequential since the patterns observed in the quantitative (QUAN) phase have been used to develop the qualitative (QUAL) phase. Furthermore, both are given equal status (QUAN-QUAL). What is more, both the questionnaire and the interviews were conducted in Spanish and therefore, comments and questions used in the survey have all been translated into English in the Discussion of Results for ease of reading.

2.2. Participants

The total number of participants is 136, of both sexes and covering generally the age range from 18 to more than 30. The basic requirements to participate in the study were being Spanish and having studied English at any moment of their lives. Consequently, there is a wide variety of ages, experiences, opinions, and English levels. It is also important to add that the subjects were either degree or master students, lower or higher professional education students or workers, which means that they all have finished compulsory education. According to Rogerson-Revell (2011), age, personality, aptitude, exposure, and sociocultural factors are determinant in the process of acquiring the L2 phonological features. Hence, it could be said that all these elements are highly relevant in the study.

Moreover, according to Mompeán González's (2004) and Walker's (2010) observations, RP is still the preferred pronunciation model among students and teachers in Spain. Therefore, it can be considered that most of the participants have been exposed to a British standard model of pronunciation. Needless to say, all the subjects participated on a voluntary basis and the responses from both, the questionnaire and the interviews, were anonymous. The anonymity was preserved by never asking the participants' names in the survey and by referring to them as 'P' followed by a number in the interviews. In addition, the questions and answers were in Spanish in order to simplify the task for those subjects who are not fully proficient in English. The purpose of my research is not to assess the student's level of English but to gather data in which the participants' self-reflexivity, opinions and experiences allow me to draw conclusions on why a target model is not the preferable option and the significant disadvantages that it may pose to the learners of the language.

2.3. Quantitative research: the questionnaire

After I did some research on the topic and questioned things myself, the questionnaire was designed considering certain remarks made by Hancock (2019) regarding topics such as accent tolerance, intelligibility, re-thinking pronunciation goals and accommodation, to which learners could relate to. Once created, it was administered via Google Forms to collect the quantitative data, and randomly shared among students on social media.

The structure of the questionnaire consists of three clear parts, first, general questions regarding sex, age and the type of study or work. The last question of the first part forks the questionnaire into four different sections: students from the degree of English Studies, students from other university degrees, students from low and high professional education and people who are currently working, which lead to the second part in which each of them is analysed. Students from the degree of English Studies were asked about the course they were currently on or if they had finished already, if they had any certified level of English, which one and the certifying body, in which field they would like to work, if they had been part of the Erasmus + programme and where. People from the rest of the categories had some additional questions: what degree they studied or where they worked, if English is their second or third foreign language, where they had learnt English, and what was their purpose in learning English. The questions were either yes or no questions or multiple-choice questions with a variety of possible answers. What is more, they always had the 'other' answer available which has been positively used as an option for clarifying their answers.

The third and last section is the most relevant for the research and comprises a wide variety of sixteen general questions for all the respondents regarding their personal

experiences and opinions towards English pronunciation and its teaching. In regards to the type of questions, there are yes and no questions, multiple-choice questions, and Likert scale questions whose answer choices range from 1 to 10 (see Appendix for the complete ‘Questionnaire - general questions’ list).

As can be seen, the questions attempt to know people’s basic personal information, experiences, and attitudes (Rogerson-Revell, 2011) and to make them take a step further, reflect and indirectly re-think concepts that have traditionally been established as the norm (Thir, 2016). After getting the 136 responses, I carefully analysed every detail in order to elaborate the questions for the qualitative part.

2.4. Qualitative research: the interviews

The qualitative part was developed during the confinement period and consequently, the interviews were conducted through videoconference programmes such as Skype, Zoom and Hangouts. In addition, the subjects that took part in the interview process were people who had already done the survey and had some general knowledge of the topics. They were given 7 questions and they had to answer them orally while I recorded them. In particular, I was cautious, and I did not interrupt their monologues since my questions or comments could have influenced the participants’ responses and opinions. In addition, I have numbered the participants from 1 to 20 so that I can refer to them anonymously in the analysis of the qualitative results.

The questions for the interviews were made after considering ambiguous data from the surveys. The interview protocol questions tackle more personal subjects like their use of English, opinions on the Spanish educational system, inferiority, accommodation and issues regarding accent and nationality among others (see Appendix for the complete ‘Interview protocol’). The purpose of the interviews was

having a more direct and personal contact with the participants in order to clarify indeterminate opinions and identify recurrent themes.

Once I had completed the 20 interviews, I transcribed the recordings so that I could start analysing them in detail. The analysis process entailed several deep and careful line-by-line readings of the interviews and the use of the corpus tool ‘AntConc’ which allowed me to identify repetitions, transitions, missing data, and similarities and differences among the participants’ responses (Ryan G. and Russell Bernard. H., 2003). Moreover, throughout the entire research process I kept a word document in which I made annotations of all the results that I had obtained from both, the questionnaire and the interviews, which enabled me to compare the quantitative and qualitative data easily and reach final conclusions.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section I present the major findings of my research, starting with the outcome of the survey and moving on to the results of the interviews in an attempt to substantiate the need of the dismantlement of a model for ELF, and the establishment of the new era of ‘Post-ELF’.

3.1. The survey

The results from the survey attempt to answer the first research question (RQ1), which examines the opinions and experiences of Spanish students of English, if they are satisfied with the way in which English is taught in Spain and if they prefer an educational system based on achieving a ‘native-like’ accent or a more flexible approach based on ELF/‘post-ELF’.

Regarding the general results from the survey, it is worth mentioning that 88.2 % of the respondents are women and that the most common age range is that of 22 to 25

years old with 60.3 %. Considering the previous results and the fact that the survey was mainly conducted among university students, it is not unexpected that 32.4 % of the respondents are students from the English Studies degree, 53.7 % students from other university degrees and only 7.4 % high and low professional education students and 6.6 % workers. Hence, the results taken into account in the study are those from the categories of 'English studies' and 'other degrees' since they are the most numerous.

In relation to the English Studies participants, it can be highlighted that about 70 % of the participants have already finished the degree. What is more, almost 80 % have a certified level which ranges from B2 to C2 and around 70 % has been part of the Erasmus + programme. Concerning the participants who have studied other degrees different from English Studies, it is relevant to mention that there is a wide variety of degrees from different fields such as sciences, art, economy, engineering etc... and not just humanities. Once again, almost 50 % of the students have already finished their degree and many are in their last years. Moreover, 95 % of the students confirm to have been studying English for "more than 10 years" and "all [their] lives" and 65 % have a certified English level which ranges from B1 to C1. What is more, over 90 % consider English their second language and only 16 % has been part of the Erasmus + programme.

According to what Carrie (2017) states, EFL is taught in Spanish schools from the early ages of three to six years old which explains the survey comments of having studied English 'all their lives'. What is more, the fact that "the average proficiency level amongst adults has moved from 'low' to 'moderate'" (Carrie, 2017) is also reflected in the results since 89.1 % of the participants have at least a B2 certified level. This might have to do with the dominance of English as the global language and its role

as the ‘common language’ nowadays (Walker, 2010, p. 6). Consequently, two thirds of the respondents have been part of the Erasmus + programme which means that they have used the language in an international environment and might have been reflective about their national identity and their accent.

94.9 % of the respondents have declared that English knowledge is essential nowadays. Furthermore, the subjects’ top aims for learning English are clearly stated as ‘work’, which may be implying the possibility of intending to work abroad, ‘travelling’ and ‘global communication’. Hence, it can be seen how people are embracing a more global environment and international possibilities. Nevertheless, this attitude has still a long way to go in the Spanish educational system since it has always been focused on sticking to a monolithic model and achieving a “native-like” pronunciation (Carrie, 2017). As 94.4 % of the respondents corroborate in the general questions, students are only “trained” to understand and speak a standard variety, either General British (GB) or General American (GA).

Hence, logically, since the purpose of pronunciation teaching has always been “the mastery of the NS norm” (Thir, 2016, p. 2) and “accents perceived to be closer to the so-called ‘standard’ [have] tend[ed] to be rated more positively for competence” (Carrie, 2017), it is no surprise that the results show that 75.7 % of the respondents feel flattered and ‘awarded’ when they are told that they sound like a NS. According to some comments from the surveys, they feel “motivated” and “confident” when this happens. Nevertheless, the Spanish educational system somehow fosters competitiveness and prejudices, and consequently, around half of the participants confirm to have felt inferior and judged while speaking English with NS. This theme

will be further analysed in the qualitative part with regards to the interviewees' experiences and reflections on the topic.

In a similar vein, native-speaker teachers have been conventionally praised in educational scenarios in Spain as if the mere fact of being NS magically turned them into experts of the language (Llurda, 2014). However, McKay (2005) categorises this view as a myth and clearly states that “if a native speaker is lacking in expertise in the language and has not acquired competency in language pedagogy” will not fulfil the expectations of a teacher (p. 35). Therefore, as the majority of the respondents have claimed, a qualified NNS teacher of English must be equally praised and accepted, and can definitely perform as efficiently as a native one. Moreover, there are cases in which a NNS can understand the students even better since they have been in the same position as foreign language students (McKay, 2005). In terms of accent and personal choices, teachers become the custom pronunciation model of the classroom (Hancock, 2019) and they should not feel obligated to reject their identity and their accent in order to “modify their speech in the direction of RP” or the implemented model (Mompeán González, 2008).

The relationship between accent and identity is widely discussed among experts on the field of L2 pronunciation acquisition such as Jenkins (2000), Rogerson-Revell (2011) and Walker (2010). Our pronunciation is deeply connected with our identity and our accents reflect our nationality and origins. This is marvellously stated by Jenkins (2005) in the following quote,

“[p]ronunciation seems to be particularly bound up with identity. Our accents are an expression of who we are or aspire to be, of how we want to be seen by others, of the social communities with which we identify or seek membership, and of whom we admire or ostracise.” (p. 5)

Hence, students' English accent should be a fairly personal choice and no one should be forced to follow a standard variety and eliminate the traces of their native languages (Thir, 2016). Likewise, if it is the case of a NNS wishing to attain a native-like English pronunciation, it should be equally respected and accepted. Regarding the results of the surveys in this view, 75 % of the respondents have voted between 5 and 10 in the Likert scale supporting accented speech, but the higher percentage is found in the middle, leaving the outcome as somewhat ambiguous. Nevertheless, the feeling of doubt is understandable since English has always been taught in terms of “good” and “bad” pronunciation with regard to the norm (Abercrombie, 1991).

Over 70 % have recognised to be fluent in English and over 80 % prioritise fluency and errors over a well-thought and slow speech. According to Walker (2010), “intelligibility is paramount to ELF communication” and this view is supported by the respondents who give preference to dialogue and understanding over “accuracy”. Nevertheless, the concept of “intelligibility” has been traditionally established from the perspective of NS (Jenkins, 2000) and as a result, accented speech has been attributed negative connotations due to its assumed limited intelligibility (Walker, 2010). Furthermore, 85.5 % of the respondents consider that speaking English “correctly” has to do with being able to communicate and understand people. Hence, pronunciation teaching should promote international intelligibility as the ultimate purpose (Thir, 2016).

In view of this discussion, Hancock (2019) questions Levis' (2005, p. 370) simple dichotomy of “Nateness Principle” and “Intelligibility Principle”, and proposes the so-called “Variability Principle” which goes beyond the “intelligible for who” problem and asserts that “if it exists in a widely understood variant of English, [such a

regional British accent or an international one], then it is probably ok". (Hancock, 2019). This idea is clearly supported by the 70 % of the respondents who claim that they see themselves as capable of understanding any kind of English, either native or non-native.

As Hancock (2019) states, "in an ELF speech community, [speakers] will pronounce locally and understand globally" (p. 5). This quote makes reference to the concepts of "accent tolerance", "accommodation", and productive and receptive pronunciation teaching. In an international speech community, every speaker pronounces "locally" since they add elements of their own native languages to English and understands "globally" due to their exposure to a wide variety of different accents. In addition, listeners cannot control the accents to which they are exposed. Therefore, everyone should be willing to accommodate and adapt their speech and be tolerant to other people's accents (Hancock, 2019). These concepts are represented in the results of the survey since the majority of the respondents have claimed that they do not try to hide their native accent when travelling abroad and also, they agree with the fact that speakers tend to adapt their speech depending on who is the receptor in a conversation.

Finally, it is very important to mention that over 80 % of the respondents agree with the globalisation of English and its role as a "common language" among speakers (Walker, 2010, p. 6). What is more, 90 % agree to identify themselves with the ELF approach over the native-like approach, thus supporting the quote of "English as a dynamic, changeable and diverse language which adapts to the necessities and the use of the speakers". Summing up, the influence of the global power of English and the co-existent linguistic diversity nowadays is undeniable (McKay, 2005). This situation

is unwittingly opening people's minds and motivating a shift of focus in the teaching of English.

In view of the results and taking into account the fact that over the half of the respondents correspond to the 'other degrees' group and that almost 70% have already finished their degrees, it can be concluded that the data obtained from the surveys is reliable since the respondents are mainly graduate students who have had time to reflect and re-think the covered issues. Moreover, the participants have a high level of English, 89.1 % have at least a B2 level. Hence, these trending topics cannot be fully attributed to what English Studies students learn in the degree but as a current issue having an impact on everyone belonging to the global community.

3.2. The interviews

The results from the interviews attempt to answer the second research question (RQ2), which intends to find out if the respondents would actually support an ELF/'Post-ELF' approach. Taking a look at the survey's results, the respondents generally think along the same lines as ELF but there are still ambiguous opinions which may originate from a long-standing way of teaching the language which prioritises the native norm. Hence, it is unclear whether they just find attractive the idealised version offered by the theory of ELF or if they genuinely put it into practice in their daily life and international encounters. This section aims to look at students from a closer and rather personal point of view and it is organised around those relevant topics that were regularly mentioned and reflected on by the participants.

First of all, the majority of the participants state that English is essential in their lives, and not only academically, English not only plays an important role because scientific bibliography for research is mainly in English as several participants claim,

but also because nowadays it is required to make use of social media, to access media content in the original version, and to communicate internationally. However, this is rather subjective since it has to do with people's personality, aims and priorities (Rogerson-Revell, 2011, pp. 16-19). For instance, it is more likely for English Studies students to be immersed in the language due to the fact that it is part of their daily life and interests. Nevertheless, the irrefutable dominant power of English and its presence in every sphere of life nowadays has an unpremeditated impact on most people's lives (Isik, 2008, pp. 123-125).

Regarding the concept of 'speaking English correctly', or more significantly, 'being able to speak English', there are plenty of different opinions. Generally, most interviewees agree that it has to do with being able to communicate with people regardless of making grammatical mistakes. Some relevant comments on this are: "As long as the communication flows, I think that accent and possible grammatical mistakes are secondary" (P7); "being able to speak English has to do with going abroad and being able to participate in conversations" (P19). On the contrary, few respondents consider absolutely relevant to "an accurate grammar and a good enough pronunciation to be understood" (P11). What is more, other respondents go beyond and associate being able to speak English with more abstract concepts such as expressing thoughts and abstract feelings, joking and having a certain knowledge of set expressions. The majority of the participants clearly think along the same lines of ELF and advocate for an education based on communication as the main purpose.

The following comment from the previous section introduces the next area of concern, the flaws of the Spanish educational system and the drawbacks of a model: "there is a lot of pressure in achieving the perfect pronunciation or an impeccable

grammar while what actually matters is being able to communicate and being understood” (P8). This remark sums up the imposed monolithic way of teaching English in Spain (Carrie, 2017) and the pressure it supposes to students due to its focus on “memorising norms” (P19). In addition, regarding the teaching of a single variety, several interviewees complain about the fact that British and American models are sometimes mixed which confuses the learners, and also that focusing on a single variety limits the understanding of other accents. This idea is supported by the comment of the P15, used to popular American pronunciation which is common in series and films, who states that “when the accent is ‘very’ British, [she] can’t understand what they are saying”. Moreover, P10 corroborates that “ [i]n the study of other languages, there is no such focus on a single model”. Hence, regardless of three participants who indisputably defend the need of a model, the focus on a single variety and a “correct learning of the language” (P12), the rest advocate for its, at least partial, dismantlement.

In the same way as Jenkins’ (2000) proposes the ‘Lingua Franca Core’ (LFC) as an international model and guide, most of the participants consider that it is acceptable to ‘unleash’ the pronunciation of English but within certain limits, and some of them consider the solution to this to be a neutral model or the introduction of learners’ to several models such as Mompeán González’s (2004) polymodel approach. Nevertheless, in accordance with Walker’s (2010) remarks, communication is paramount to them in the teaching of English and therefore, they would prefer it if speaking and pronunciation were prioritised over grammatical norms and accurateness which are mostly unattainable.

According to what Szpyra-Kozłowska (2018) alleges, “the failure to attain [a native-like pronunciation] breeds learners’ and teachers’ frustration, language insecurity

and feelings of linguistic and social inferiority” (p. 306), the following topic attempts to represent through the participants’ comments how the focus on an unattainable model triggers these insecurities. In relation to the survey question in which the respondents were asked if they had ever felt inferior while speaking English, the interviewees were requested to choose the situation in which they were more likely to feel inferior or judged, either speaking English with a NS, with another Spanish student or with a non-native international student. The results are startling since 9 participants claim to feel more inferior with a NS, another 9 with a Spanish students, and all of them agreed on feeling comfortable while speaking with an international student.

Regarding the feeling of inferiority with a NS, the following remarks introduce some of the participants’ preoccupations:

“[the situation in which] I have felt more judged is having a conversation with a NS, [...] they master the language and they are perfectly aware of you making mistakes which makes you stutter” (P6).

“Yes, I have felt inferior because I have an accent and that clearly brings to light the fact that I’m not a native speaker and that may contribute to other people assuming me as unintelligent and unskilled in the use of the language due to the mere fact of having an accent” (P3).

“I feel more judged [in this situation] because I think that they are paying more attention to how I say things rather than what I’m saying” (P8).

As can be seen, the constant pressure in attaining a native-like accent makes people insecure when speaking to a NS because they feel unequal and analysed which increases their nervousness in failing the established aim (Thir, 2016). Moreover, the all-time negative associations that have been attributed to accented speech as “a sign of ignorance or lack of sophistication” (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2018, p. 308) might be responsible for the increase of speakers' prejudices and feeling of incapability.

When it comes to evaluating the sense of inadequacy and inferiority of the participants in relation to another Spanish student, the irregularities of the Spanish educational system are clearly highlighted. The following comments represent the negative consequences:

“I may have felt inferior when [having to speak English] in an Spanish-speaking environment if I haven’t been able to say things correctly while others have and I have felt bad because we all come from the same starting point” (P9).

“I have felt inferior when another classmate has a closer pronunciation to what the professors teach as correct since that person is highly valued in oral exams” (P18).

“[W]hen I speak English with another Spanish student I feel more embarrassed and judged, especially if that person has a higher level [of the language]” (P15).

“It sounds horrible but I do feel that we tend to judge each other more among people from the same nationality. [...] If they [have achieved a good pronunciation], why am I incapable?” (P19).

Consequently, apart from the natural feeling of artificiality arising from speaking in a foreign language with a person who shares the same mother tongue as you, it is undeniable the competitiveness and constant comparison that wanting to achieve a supposedly unattainable model generates among students. Furthermore, this is even more incremented by the fact of it being academically valued and advantageously awarded. Moreover, it incentives misconceptions such as equallying accented speech with speaking poorly (Thir, 2016, and Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2018).

Last but not least, apart from two students who feel exceptionally inferior when speaking English with international students, the rest of the participants comment positively on this since they feel equal and understood in a globalised environment:

“[W]ith international students you hear another type of accented speech and you forget about [the negative connotations] of having an accent” (P3).

“Curiously, my experiences speaking with international students have been comfortable and relaxed which doesn’t happen when I speak with a NS since I feel the pressure of having to speak fluently and without making mistakes” (P12).

“we understand each other pretty well since both of us have a lack of nativeness” (P14).

In conclusion, students feel highly comfortable when speaking English with international students because they feel under equal conditions and absolutely tolerated which makes them unafraid of making mistakes. The concept of sharing a “lack of nativeness” is very relevant since it symbolises the superfluous character of a model.

This supports Hancock’s (2018) view of ‘Post-ELF’ teaching which rejects any model and prioritises the process over the product, the process being the course of communication, and the product the target model. Thus, the ‘Post-ELF’ scenario which promotes the “process of understanding and making yourself understood in varying global contexts” (Hancock, 2018, p. 6) could be proposed as the solution to the prejudiced monolithic approach of English teaching in Spain and even lead to the dismantlement of the need of a model for ELF. What is more, this multicultural approach has been somehow achieved in other European countries where speaking and communication is predominantly valued.

In view of an environment of equal conditions, the concept of adaptation is key to achieve an impartial scenario of communication. The learners’ capacity to adapt, or as Jenkins (2000) terms it, to “accommodate”, has to do with the adjustment “of their speech according to the person they are speaking to” (Hancock, 2019, p.7). Some of the participants understand adaptation as:

“the desire of being accepted and better understood” (P14).

“a way of knowing how to talk in order for the receptor to understand you and follow the conversation” (P15).

“a way of surviving in an unknown environment in order to become part of the community that surrounds you” (P18).

“[the adaptation] is a two-way thing” (P19).

As described by the last participant, communication should imply the adaptation of both speakers (Jenkins, 2000). Nevertheless, due to linguistic imperialism notions and the NS’s possession of the language leads to a one-sided accommodation of speech from the side of NNS (McKay, 2005). This view is corroborated by most of the interviewees:

“I have never felt the adaptation from the side of a NS” (P7).

“[we] try to adapt to NS in order to stick to the established model” (P14).

“[we] adapt to NS to improve our pronunciation. I think this happens because it is easier to learn (adaptation from NNS to NS) than to unlearn (adaptation from NS to NNS)” (P10).

Once again, this has negative implications because of a constant obsession with a model (Hancock, 2019). Consequently, working on the basis that the number of NNS outnumbers that of NS in the present society (Walker, 2010), McKay (2005, pp. 33-35) encourages the shift from “native speaker” to “expert user”, claiming the global ownership of English speakers in an attempt to reach an equitable linguistic context with a legitimate two-sided accommodation, free of prejudices and insecurities.

As it has been pointed out throughout the present study, the increasing globalisation of the world and the era of linguistic diversity is unquestionably at its full glory (McKay, 2005) thanks to the establishment of English as the “common language” (Walker, 2010, p. 6). Multiculturality and linguistic richness is undoubtedly valued by the participants:

“keeping in touch with many different cultures is enriching. [...] [W]e shouldn’t be ashamed of our accents ” (P3).

“as long as you are understood, you are free to choose if you want to have an accent or not” (P7).

“[w]e should be proud of our accents, how boring would it be if everyone spoke in the same standard accent?” (P8).

“I defend diversity and the preservation of our own personal footprint, [...] otherwise the language richness would be missing” (P10).

Taking a look at the comments, it is remarkable the sense of community that they all share, not only as NNS, but as speakers of English, by referring to their personal ideas and experiences with the first person plural, ‘we’. Hence, apart from some comments which support the need of assimilation due to employment issues in the ‘Inner Circle’ countries, most of the participants embrace accented speech and the need of normalising the representation of our identity through our accent as long as it is intelligible.

Ultimately, concerning the idea of diversity and multiculturalism, the following comments represent the respondents’ positive interpretations of the quote “English as a dynamic, changeable, and diverse language which adapts to the necessities and the use of the speakers”, based on Hancock’s (2018) idea of ‘Post-ELF’:

“English is the bridge between cultures in the nowadays’ globalised world” (P3).

“[I]t is the mere reflection of the present-day world, that is to say, a language shared among multiple and increasing nationalities” (P12).

“[I]t is changeable, each speaker adds new nuances to the language. [I] think what I like most about English is that it doesn’t have a “RAE”*, thus, it is easier to make variations” (P8). *Real Academia Española.

“[I]t is the universal contact language, it is important to preserve cultural differences” (P10).

“[E]ach person uses it in their own way, I like that, English moulds to the person, and not the person to English” (P17).

As can be seen, the participants support the idea that English is the ‘common language’ between cultures (Walker, 2010, p. 6), a “living organism” which is in constant change

with regards to those who use it. Hence, as the global language, each speaker and nation equally contribute to its shaping.

This is what I have been referring to as ‘Post-ELF’, Hancock’s (2018, p. 2) idea of a tolerating society represented as “a rainbow of different colours” and “a wide spectrum of different accents” where “none of [them] are superior or more ‘correct’ than any of the others” and where intelligibility and communication are the essential premises for teaching.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A detailed analysis of both the QUAN and QUAL parts of the research displays that the majority of the Spanish students argue for the dismantlement of the need of a pronunciation model, and unconsciously support the ‘Post-Elf’ scenario in an attempt to escape the burden of sticking to a monolithic model and attaining a native-like pronunciation which is presented as the source of their insecurities. What is more, it has been proved that most of them prioritise communication and understanding, embrace accented speech positively, and advocate for the freedom of accent choice as long as the speech is intelligible. Furthermore, regarding gender issues, the fact that around 95 % of the participants are women poses the question of whether the research could have been potentially determined by the female voice.

In order to accomplish the gradual dismantlement of the model, a shift of mindset in the implementation of the Spanish educational system is here recommended in a non-arbitrary and informed manner on account of the empirical perception of learners' attitudes towards it. My personal proposal is to create an environment of diversity and multiculturalism and to introduce English in the classroom from an early age giving utmost priority to communication and intelligibility through the

normalisation and visibility of all kinds of accents, and not only those from the 'Inner Circle' varieties.

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6. APPENDIX

CUESTIONARIO - PREGUNTAS GENERALES

1. ¿Consideras esencial el conocimiento básico del inglés hoy en día?
2. Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'no' y 10 'sí', ¿hablas inglés fluido, es decir, puedes mantener conversaciones rápidas, hablando espontáneamente, y/o comprendes sin mucho problema series y películas en versión original en inglés?
3. Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'despacio pero de manera correcta' y 10 'con fluidez y sin prestar atención a los posibles fallos', ¿crees que es más importante hablar inglés gramaticalmente de manera correcta, sin cometer fallos, pero más despacio y pensando más en lo que dices o hablar de manera fluida sin prestar tanta atención a usar una pronunciación estándar tipo 'nativa' y una gramática 'nativa'?
4. Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'no' y 10 'sí', ¿te consideras capaz de entender cualquier acento de inglés ya sea nativo o no nativo?
5. En cuanto al sistema educativo español, ¿crees que nos preparan para entender cualquier tipo de acento? ¿O se basan más en enseñarnos una sola variedad, ya sea inglés británico o inglés americano?
6. En tu opinión, ¿qué significa hablar inglés bien? (Elige la que se acerque más a tu opinión)
7. ¿Te has sentido inferior alguna vez o juzgado por un hablante nativo de inglés?
8. En relación a la pregunta anterior, ¿quieres compartir tu experiencia?
9. ¿Te halaga que te digan que pareces un hablante nativo al hablar inglés o te gustaría que te lo dijeran?

10. Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'nativo' y 10 'nacionalidad', ¿crees que es esencial hablar como un hablante nativo o crees que también es importante que nuestra identidad y nacionalidad se vean reflejadas en nuestro acento?
11. ¿Crees que los profesores de academias de inglés y universidad tendrían que ser únicamente nativos o no es tan importante?
12. ¿Cuándo viajas a un país de habla inglesa, intentas que no se note tu nacionalidad? ('assimilate')
13. ¿Crees que adaptamos nuestra manera de hablar inglés dependiendo de la persona y la nacionalidad de la persona con la que estamos hablando y su nivel de inglés?
14. ¿Cuando viajas al extranjero, a un país de habla no inglesa, y tienes que comunicarte con la gente sueles usar el inglés como vía de comunicación o intentas aprender y usar el idioma oficial de ese país?
15. Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'no de acuerdo' y 10 'totalmente de acuerdo', ¿estás de acuerdo en que el inglés se haya convertido en el idioma global?
16. Después de haber aprendido un poco más sobre qué es el ELF ('English as a *Lingua Franca*'/ 'Inglés como lengua franca'), ¿con cuál te identificas más o encaja mejor con tus objetivos? Del 1 al 10, siendo 1 'Inglés nativo' (enfoque tradicional basado en un modelo, normas, precisión) y 10 'ELF' (el inglés como una lengua dinámica, cambiante, diversa, que se adapta a las necesidades y uso de los hablantes).

QUESTIONNAIRE – GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you consider that a basic knowledge of English is something essential nowadays?

2. From 1 to 10, 1 being 'no' and 10 being 'yes', do you speak fluent English, that is to say, are you able to have quick conversations, speaking spontaneously, and understanding TV series and movies effortlessly in the original version?
3. From 1 to 10, 1 being 'slow but accurately' and 10 being 'fluently and without paying attention to possible mistakes', do you think it is more important to speak English in a grammatically correct way, without making mistakes but speaking slower and paying attention to how you say things, or to speak fluently without paying so much attention to using an accurate native-like pronunciation and grammar?
4. From 1 to 10, 1 being 'no' and 10 being 'yes', do you consider yourself capable of understanding any English accent, either native or non-native?
5. Regarding the Spanish educational system, do you think that students are trained to understand any kind of accent or do they focus mainly on teaching just one standard variety, either British or North American?
6. In your opinion, what does 'speaking English properly' mean to you? (choose the answer that fits you better)
7. Have you ever felt inferior to or judged by a native speaker of English?
8. In relation to the previous question, would you like to share your personal experience?
9. Do you feel flattered when someone tells you that you sound like a native speaker while speaking English or would you like to be told that?

10. From 1 to 10, 1 being 'native' and 10 being 'nationality', do you think that it is essential to speak English like a native speaker or do you consider that it is also important for our identity and nationality to be represented in our accents?
11. Do you think that teachers at English academies and universities should be exclusively native speakers or it is not so important whether they are native speakers or not?
12. When you travel abroad to an English-speaking country, do you try to hide your nationality? ('assimilate')
13. Do you think that we adapt our way of speaking English depending on the person to which we are talking to and their nationality and level of English?
14. When you travel abroad to a non-English-speaking country and you have to communicate with people, do you usually use English as a communication path, or do you try to learn and use the official language of that country?
15. From 1 to 10, 1 being 'do not agree' and 10 being 'absolutely agree', do you agree with the fact that English has become the global language?
16. After having learnt more about what is ELF (English as a *Lingua Franca*), which one do you identify more with? From 1 to 10, being 1 'Native English' (a traditional approach based on a model, norm, and preciseness) and 10 'ELF' (English as a dynamic, changeable and diverse language which adapts to the necessities and use of its speakers).

PROTOCOLO DE ENTREVISTA

1. ¿Es esencial en tu día a día el conocimiento del inglés? ¿Para qué lo usas?
2. En cuanto al Sistema Educativo Español, en las encuestas ha salido claramente una mayoría que considera que la enseñanza del inglés se basa en un único modelo de pronunciación, ya sea el americano o el británico. ¿Qué crees que falla? ¿Qué se podría hacer para cambiarlo? ¿Crees que no se debería dar tanta importancia a una pronunciación super correcta? ¿Igual dejar de buscar un modelo es la solución?
3. ¿Qué es hablar inglés bien para ti?
4. ¿Te has sentido inferior alguna vez? En qué situación de las siguientes crees que te sientes más juzgado, ¿estudiante español (tú) – otro estudiante español? ¿estudiante español (tú) – estudiante internacional (hablante no nativo de inglés)? ¿español (tú) – hablante nativo de inglés?
5. En la encuesta hablábamos de adaptación de pronunciación de unas personas a otras, según la persona, la nacionalidad, su nivel de inglés... ¿Qué es para ti esa adaptación? ¿adaptación de qué? ¿quién crees que se adapta a quién, los no nativos a los nativos, o los nativos a los no nativos?
6. Vivimos en un mundo globalizado en el que se ha consensuado que el inglés es la lengua ‘de contacto’ entre personas de distintas nacionalidades, lo que viene a ser el Inglés como Lengua Franca (ELF, English as a *Lingua Franca*), igual que lo fue el latín en el pasado. A su vez, es un mundo que defiende la diversidad, cada uno tiene su lengua materna, su cultura, sus costumbres... Por lo tanto, ¿crees que es importante que

se note nuestra nacionalidad en nuestro acento? ¿O crees que deberíamos ‘asimilarnos’ en la cultura dominante y que no se note nuestro acento?

7. ¿Qué significa para ti la cita de la última pregunta de las encuestas ‘el inglés como lengua dinámica, cambiante, diversa, que se adapta a las necesidades y el uso de los hablantes’? La base del ELF.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Is English essential in your daily life? What do you use it for?
2. Regarding the Spanish educational system, according to the survey’s results, the majority of the respondents consider that English teaching is based on a single monolithic model of pronunciation, either British or North American. What do you think is the problem? What could be done in order to change this? Do you think that maybe not focusing on an accurate pronunciation would be a solution? Or maybe stop sticking to a single model?
3. What does it mean speaking English properly for you?
4. Have you ever felt inferior? In which of the following situations do you feel more judged? Spanish student (you) – another Spanish student; Spanish student (you) – international student (non-native speaker of English); Spanish student (you) – English native speaker.
5. A recurrent topic in the survey was that of adapting to other people’s pronunciation regarding their nationality, their English level... What is for you that adaptation?

Adaptation of what? Who do you think adapts to who, non-natives to natives or natives to non-natives?

6. We live in a globalised world in which English has been chosen as the ‘common language’ among people from different countries, which amounts to English as a *Lingua Franca*, the same as it happened with Latin in the past. Likewise, it is a world where diversity, different languages, cultures, and customs are highlighted. Hence, do you think it is important for our nationalities to be reflected in our accents? Or do you think that we should ‘assimilate’ in the dominant culture and hide our accents?

7. What does the quote from the last question in the survey mean to you ‘English as a dynamic, changeable, and diverse language which adapts to the necessities and use of its speakers’?, the basis of ELF.